

Appleby Archaeology Group : January 2007

A well-attended AGM and Members evening was held on January 9th. 2007 Two members gave presentations: Martin Joyce spoke on "Wells of Eden" and Anne Bell gave a talk entitled "Keeping the Barbarians Out".

Martin began by describing his surprise when he realised that a pool at the foot of a stone pillar he had stopped to examine near Morland Church was in fact a large spring. Although the pillar turned out to be a modern feature, the spring, labelled Powdonnet Well on the map, was clearly of much more ancient significance.

This discovery sparked a more general interest in these ancient wells, which appeared to have a close relationship with churches of our own era. Martin illustrated this by a series of maps showing how often churches have a well in close association. A good example is St Peter's at Gt Asby

Martin concluded his talk with a slide of the spring at Morland. This showed one more curious feature. The spring is sited on the edge of the village and is surrounded by fields. In the background of the slide, can be seen a lady busily clearing the dead undergrowth and burning it on a bonfire. Even in these giddy days of silicon intelligence and dark matter it seems that someone still finds it important to pay attention to the concerns of earlier times!

Anne Bell then described a walk along Hadrian's Wall that she and her husband undertook in 2004. Careful planning was essential as they travelled from home, walked a section and returned home in the evening. They walked from east to west completing the walk over a period of weeks.

Slides illustrated their journey from Segedunum, the fort at the eastern end of the wall, to Bowness on Solway. The first, taken at Segedunum showed a list of the names of those who constructed the wall, which immediately provided a human interest

Travelling west, Anne and her husband had opportunities to explore many features such as the well-preserved Poltross Burn milecastle.

The fort at Chesters, which was built to defend a bridge carrying the wall across the Tyne, interested Anne as the remains of the bridge can be seen and it was a chance to compare the ruined bathhouse there with the reconstructed bathhouse at Segedunum

The Hadrian's Wall National Trail ends, or starts, at Bowness on Solway and although there is no evidence of the wall here, Roman stonework can be seen in present-day buildings.

Anne concluded by recommending the experience to the group

Phyllis Rouston